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A STUDY OF MULTIPLE CRIMINAL FACTORS¹

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A program of psychiatric and psychological examining for the correctional institutions of the State of New Jersey has recently been initiated by Commissioner Burdette G. Lewis, under authority of the State Board of Control of Institutions and Agencies of New Jersey. It provides for applying the army group test methods, supplemented by extensive individual examinations. The army group test score is used as a preliminary intelligence rating in estimating general intelligence. It proves satisfactory for a survey of the group as a whole and gives a good perspective of the group as a whole, but it is not considered sufficiently reliable as a final rating of the individual prisoner until checked by clinical examination. Group examinations are therefore supplemented as rapidly as possible by individual psychiatric and psychological examinations. These examinations follow the usual procedures of clinical psychiatry and psychology, and particularly make use of the new methods and standards developed in the army.

In the psychological examinations, a special information blank has been developed as a supplement to the diagnostic clinical syllabus. This is employed in clinical examinations to render the examination as informal and unobjectionable as possible to the prisoner who tends to resist formal examination. This information also serves to throw valuable light upon the mentality of the prisoner in everyday problems closely related to his personal experiences and interests.

The statistical analysis of results obtained in the clinical psychological examinations by direct tests and the information blank yields valuable data for the investigation of the interrelation of criminal factors. The system developed for use at the N. J. State Prison has certain merits to commend itself to criminologists. The statistical scheme is flexible. It can be expanded to include other items or greater detail of items.

A card-filing system has been instituted by means of which all the significant data obtained by the psychologist for each man are recorded upon cards. These tabulated data refer particularly to crime, minimum sentence, previous record, nationality, years in the United

¹Publication is approved by the Commissioner of Institutions and Agencies of New Jersey in order to secure discussion of findings for the benefit of further investigations and institutional administration.

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the interrelation of each factor to any other factor. The first 152 cases examined individually at the N. J. State Prison have been tabulated in this way. The results and the method of tabulation are presented in Table I. The cases are about equally divided between routine admissions and routine paroles.

The significance of the table is self-evident. The first horizontal line, for example, reads as follows: Ten prisoners (out of a total of 152 reported) are serving for murder; 8 of them have no known previous record, 1 has served at least one term, and 1 has served more than one term; 3 are serving minimum sentences of from 1 to 5 years, 1 is serving a minimum sentence between 5 and 10 years, 2 are serving between 10 and 20, and 4 are serving more than 20. By nationality, 2 of these murderers are native white, 2 are colored, 4 are Italian foreign-born, and 2 are other foreign-born; 4 of the foreign-born murderers have been in the U. S. between 5 and 15 years, and 2 have been here longer than 15 years. By age, 4 of these murderers are between 20 and 30 years old, 4 are between 30 and 45; by mental age, 1 of these murderers has a mental age between 9 and 10 years, 5 have mental ages between 10 and 12, 2 between 12 and 14, and 2 between 14 and 16; by schooling, 2 have had no schooling, 5 have had schooling between the first and fifth grade, 2 between the fifth grade and high school, and 1 has been to high school. Diagnosis indicates that 5 of these murderers are of average normal intelligence, 2 are of superior normal intelligence, 1 is feeble-minded, and 2 are psychotic. Similarly, any other line may be read horizontally or vertically.

The crimes are grouped as crimes against the person, crimes against property and against civil laws. "Assault" includes assault and battery, atrocious assault, and assault with intent to kill. "Abuse" is specifically carnal abuse. "B. E. L." refers to breaking, entering and larceny, whether separately or in combination. "Sex" includes sex offenses exclusive of rape, carnal abuse, disorderly house and receiving from a prostitute. "Sales and receipts" includes miscellaneous illegal selling and receiving, such as illegal selling of liquor, or receiving stolen goods, where the latter is not associated with breaking, entering and larceny. "Conduct" includes various illegal forms of conduct, such as carrying concealed weapons, carrying burglar tools, disorderly conduct, and so on. "Previous record" refers to any *known* previous conviction where the individual has served a sentence in any prison, reformatory or county jail, either within or outside this state. "Previous record" does not include arrests or detention in jail in the absence of definite sentence.

The column headed "No previous record" includes those prisoners against whom there is no *known* previous sentence either in New Jersey or in any other state.

From an inspection of this table we may analyze out certain cardinal facts regarding the 152 prisoners here reported. It is unsafe to come to any positive conclusions on the basis of these cases or to make any far-reaching generalizations. We cannot say how representative these prisoners are of prisoners in general, who are known to vary in character with season and with locality. About half of these cases were examined without selection from new admissions, while the other half were unselected cases applying for parole.

SUMMARY OF INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

1. *Crime.*

Ten of the 152 prisoners were serving for murder, 34 for assault, 4 for rape, 6 for carnal abuse, 65 for breaking, entering and larceny, 8 for forgery and embezzlement, 10 for illegal receipts and sales, and 15 for illegal conduct. That is, 54 prisoners or 36 per cent of all these prisoners were serving sentences for crimes against the person. Seventy-three, or 48 per cent, were serving sentences for crimes against property, while 25, or 16 per cent, were serving sentences for crimes against civil laws regulating public behavior. The predominating crimes are breaking and entering, which comprises 22 per cent of all cases, and assault and battery, which comprises 22 per cent of all cases. These two types of offenses combined include about two-thirds of all these prisoners.

2. *Previous Record.*

For 85 prisoners there is no known previous record. For 37 there is knowledge of at least 1 previous term, and for 30 there is knowledge of at least 2 terms or more. That is, from the standpoint of known sentences, 56 per cent of these men are first offenders, although, of course, many of them may have committed crimes without being detected or may have served sentences concerning which we have not been able to obtain information. This percentage corresponds very closely to the annual statistics regarding previous record, as published in successive annual reports of the New Jersey State Prison.

3. *Minimum Sentence.*

The minimum sentences of these prisoners, which in general are the full sentences that the prisoners actually serve, were less than 5 years for 131, or 86 per cent, of these prisoners, while 12 were serv-

ing minimum sentences of from 5 to 10 years, 4 from 10 to 20 years, and 5 from 20 years to life sentence. That is, regardless of type of crime, previous record or mental responsibility, 86 per cent of these offenders are sentenced for less than 5 years. For the prison as a whole, as indicated by the 1918 annual report, 55 per cent have minimum of less than 5 years.

4. *Nationality.*

By nationality, 66 of these prisoners were native-born whites, 36 were negroes, 22 Italians, and 28 miscellaneous foreign-born. These percentages are closely similar to the population statistics of the N. J. State Prison as a whole.

5. *Years of Foreign-born in the U. S.*

Of 48 foreign-born none had been in this country less than 5 years, 32 have been here between 5 and 15 years, and 16 have been here 15 years or more.

6. *Age.*

Fifty-one men are between 20 and 30 years of age, 68 between 30 and 45, and 33 are 45 or older. The median age is 36 years.

7. *Mental Age.*

One of the 152 has a mental age under 8 years, 5 have mental ages between 8 and 9 years, 15 between 9 and 10, 46 between 10 and 12 years, 43 between 12 and 14, 30 between 14 and 16, 9 between 16 and 18, and 3 are 18 or over. The median mental age is approximately 12 years—that is, about 50 per cent have mental ages below 12 years and about 50 per cent mental ages above 12 years. This distribution of mental ages is much the same as that found among recruits in the army. It is slightly lower than the army average because of the excessive numbers of negroes and foreign-born among these prisoners. Mental ages below 12 are not to be interpreted as synonymous with feeble-mindedness.

8. *Schooling.*

Twenty-six of these prisoners say they have never been to school, 56 say they have had schooling between the first and the fifth grades, 53 have had schooling between the fifth grade and high school, 14 have had high school education, and 3 have been to college. The median schooling is about fifth grade; that is, about one-half of these prisoners have not attended beyond the fifth grade, while the other half have had schooling about the fifth grade. This is about one school grade less than the median schooling of typical army recruits.

9. *Diagnosis.*

Twenty-one of these prisoners have been diagnosed as of inferior normal intelligence, 58 as of average normal intelligence, 44 as of superior normal intelligence, 12 as feeble-minded, and 7 as psychotic. "Inferior average normal" is here used to signify that these prisoners would rank less than 25 per cent on a scale of 100 for their race and class; "average normal" means that they would rank between 25 and 75 on such a scale, and "superior normal" means that they would rank above 75 on such a scale. "Feeble-minded" means that such individual prisoners are incapable of maintaining an independent existence in society according to the standards of their race and class. "Psychotic" means that such prisoners have either active psychoses or very marked suspicion of mental instability bordering on actual insanity. These diagnoses in relation to mental age are based upon the new standards of average adult intelligence obtained by psychological examining in the army, according to which the average intelligence of native whites is about 13 years, of foreign-born about 10 years, and of negroes about 11 years. In general, the diagnoses are conservative in relation to mental age and lay stress on social competence as opposed to intellectual brightness. On this basis 8 per cent are considered feeble-minded and about 5 per cent psychotic. It is recognized that these percentages are much lower than those usually reported. The discrepancy is explained partly on the basis of possible selection, but principally upon the new clinical standards, both of mental age and feeble-mindedness obtained as a result of army experience.

INTERRELATION OF CRIMINAL FACTORS

The foregoing account has dealt with the distribution of prisoners regarding each of nine definite factors that have been considered significant in this investigation. The following observations may be made regarding the relation of each of these factors to each other:

1. RELATION OF CRIME TO OTHER FACTORS.

(a) *Crime and Previous Record.* In most of the crime groups there is a significant relationship between type of crime and previous record. The relationship is clearly showed in Table 2, which is an extract from Table 1.³ Fifty-six per cent of all these prisoners have no known previous record. As compared with this, 80 per cent of

³The percentages in the vertical columns of this table are based on the crime totals (at the extreme right of each horizontal line) and not on the previous record totals. That is, the percentages add up to 100 per cent if read horizontally.

TABLE 2
RELATION OF CRIME TO PREVIOUS RECORD

Crime	No Record		One Term		2 or More Terms		Crime Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Murder	8	80	1	10	1	10	10
Assault	25	74	7	20	2	6	34
Rape	4	100	..	..	..	..	4
Car. Abuse	5	84	..	..	1	16	6
B. & E. & L.	24	37	20	31	21	32	65
Forgery	6	75	1	12	1	12	8
Receiving	5	50	5	50	..	..	10
Conduct	8	53	3	20	4	27	15
Total	85	56	37	24	30	20	152

the murders are committed by men with no previous record, 74 per cent of assaults, 100 per cent of rapes, 84 per cent of carnal abuse, 37 per cent of breaking, entering and larceny, 75 per cent of forgery and embezzlement, 50 per cent of receiving, and 53 per cent of illegal conduct. In only 2 crimes, that of receiving and that of illegal conduct, does the percentage for those who have no previous record correspond closely to the total percentage of those who have no record. The crimes of murder, assault, rape, carnal abuse, and forgery are all committed by at least half again as many of first offenders (that is, prisoners with no *known* previous record) as there are first offenders in the total group. In other words, men who commit these crimes tend very strikingly to have no previous record. This may be a result of the impulsive or "accidental" or circumstantial nature of these crimes, or it may indicate that for crimes of this character prison sentence has a salutary or inhibitive effect with respect to later offenses of men committing these particular crimes. Crimes of breaking, entering, and larceny, and illegal receiving are significantly associated with a previous record. (The illegal receiving group includes also illegal sales.) The percentage of those in the illegal receiving group who have one previous term is twice as great as the total percentage of all who have a previous record of one term. Similarly, in the breaking, entering and larceny group there are half again as many. This indicates that those who committed the offense of illegal receiving and illegal selling, and also those who committed breaking, entering and larceny tend to have previous records of at least one term. The nature of the previous record is not known from these data, but there is reason to believe that it was for the same type of crime. The only striking relationship between crime and several previous terms is in the breaking, entering and larceny group. These relations of crime to previous record are fairly significant in view of the significant numbers of cases in each group.

(b) *Crime and Minimum Sentence.* There is practically no relation between crime and minimum sentence except that half of the murderers are sentenced for longer than ten years. It is possible that this lack of relation is due to having grouped the terms of less than five years in one category, since about 86 per cent of all prisoners are serving minimum sentences of less than five years.

(c) *Crime and Nationality.* There are some significant relationships between crime and nationality. The figures are presented in Table 3, which is an extract prepared from Table 1. Forty-three per cent of all these prisoners are native whites. Compared with this,

TABLE 3
RELATION OF CRIME TO NATIONALITY

Crime	Native White		Colored		Italian		Other Foreign		Crime Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Murder	2	20	2	20	4	40	2	20	10
Assault	9	26	14	41	5	15	6	18	34
Rape .....	..	..	..	..	2	50	2	50	4
Car. Abuse	3	50	..	..	1	16	2	33	6
B. & E. & L.	33	51	14	22	7	11	11	17	65
Forgery	3	37	1	12	1	12	3	37	8
Receiving	5	50	4	40	..	..	1	10	10
Conduct	11	73	1	7	2	13	1	7	15
Total	66	43	36	24	22	15	28	18	152

the frequencies of the several crimes committed by native whites are: Twenty per cent of murders, 26 per cent of assault, 50 per cent of carnal abuse, 51 per cent breaking, entering and larceny, 27 per cent of forgery, 50 per cent of illegal receiving, and 73 per cent of illegal conduct. The striking facts are that the percentage of murders and assaults among native whites are less than half of the total percentage of native whites for all these prisoners, and that the percentage for illegal conduct is approximately twice as great as for the total percentage. In other words, the white prisoners who are serving sentences for illegal conduct are more frequent than the total percentage of whites warrants. The crimes of assault are committed principally by negroes; 41 per cent of assaults are committed by negroes, while only 24 per cent of all these prisoners are negroes; that is, assaults among negroes are twice as frequent as the percentage of negroes warrants. Similarly, illegal receiving is more frequent among negroes than the other crimes when considered as relative to the total number of negroes; but there are only four cases, and these are principally cases of receiving money from prostitutes. In the Italian group the characteristic crimes are murder and rape, these being committed about three times as frequently as the total percentage of Italians

warrants; the number of cases in each group are, however, relatively small, there being only four cases of murder and two cases of rape among the Italians. Among the miscellaneous foreign-born prisoners the principal crimes are rape, carnal abuse and forgery or embezzlement. These three crimes occur at least twice as frequently as the total percentage of foreign-born warrants; again, however, the absolute numbers are small, there being only two cases of rape, two cases of carnal abuse, and three cases of forgery and embezzlement among the miscellaneous foreign-born.

(d) *Crime and Years in the U. S.* There is no obvious relation between the crimes of foreigners and the length of time which they have been in this country. The theory sometimes advanced that the crimes of foreigners are due to ignorance of American customs and laws because of brief residence in this country is not brought out by these data.

(e) *Crime and Age.* There is no very obvious relation of type of crime to the ages of these offenders. The majority of the breaking and entering crimes are committed by prisoners under 30, while the majority of illegal receiving and illegal conduct are committed by prisoners over 30.

(f) *Crime and Mental Age.* The relation of type of crime to mental age is influenced by the relation of crime to nationality since mental age is related to nationality. The only obvious relation of mental age to crime is that the breaking and entering group and the illegal conduct group have higher median mental ages than the other groups. This is in part due to the fact that these groups are made up principally of native whites, while the other groups include approximately equal percentages of foreign-born and negroes. The median mental ages for each crime are closely similar to the median mental ages of these offenders as a whole. Contrary to expectation the crimes of violence are not committed principally by men of low-grade mentality, except as these crimes are principally committed by negroes and foreign-born.⁴

(g) *Crime and Schooling.* Degree of schooling is so closely associated with mental age that the relation of crime to schooling is about the same as that just presented for mental ages. Contrary to expectation, certain types of crimes are not obviously related to lack of schooling.

⁴The author has elsewhere showed that the average mental age of native white adults is 13 years, while that of foreign-born and colored adults is 10 and 11 years respectively. Cf. *The Average Mental Age of Adults*, *Jom. Applied Psychology*, Dec. 1919.

(h) *Crime and Diagnosis.* Contrary to expectation and the conclusions of many writers, these results show no obvious relation of crime to diagnosis. The relationship is clearly presented in Table 4, which is an extract from Table 1. Analysis of this table shows that the distribution of diagnoses in each crime group is approximately the same

TABLE 4
RELATION OF CRIME TO DIAGNOSIS

Crime	Inferior Normal		Average Normal		Superior Normal		F. M.		Insane Psychotic		Crime Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Murder	7	20	5	50	2	20	1	10	2	20	10
Assault	7	20	14	40	10	30	2	6	1	3	34
Rape .. .. .	..	..	3	75	..	..	1	25	..	..	4
Car. Abuse	1	16	3	50	1	16	1	16	..	..	6
B. & E. & L.	10	15	26	40	21	32	5	8	3	5	65
Forgery	1	12	3	38	3	38	..	..	1	12	8
Receiving	2	20	6	60	2	20	..	..	..	..	10
Conduct .. .. .	..	..	8	53	5	33	2	14	..	..	15
Total	21	14	68	45	44	29	12	8	7	5	152

as for the total distribution of diagnoses, although the relationship is of course affected in some points by the small numbers of cases. For example, 45 per cent of all cases are diagnosed as average normals. In comparison with this, 50 per cent of the murders are committed by average normals, 40 per cent of assaults, 75 per cent of rapes, 50 per cent of carnal abuse, 40 per cent of breaking, entering and larceny, 38 per cent of forgery, 60 per cent of receiving, and 53 per cent of illegal conduct. Obviously the percentage of average normals in each crime group is not materially different from the percentage of average normals of the total crime group, except in the case of rape, which is based on a total of only four cases and might therefore be accidental. Similarly, for each other diagnostic group. Contrary to expectation, there are no strikingly characteristic crimes of the feeble-minded or the psychotic. But the total numbers of feeble-minded and psychotic are comparatively small. For example, 25 per cent of the cases of rape are committed by the feeble-minded, while the feeble-minded constitute only 8 per cent of the total group, but there is only one case of feeble-minded rape out of four cases of rape. Similarly, 20 per cent of the murders are committed by psychotics, while only 5 per cent of the total group are psychotic, but again, there are only two cases of psychotic murders. Hence it is possible that the lack of expected relationship between crime and diagnosis is due principally to our small total number of feeble-minded and psychotic prisoners.

2. RELATION OF PREVIOUS RECORD TO OTHER FACTORS.

(a) *Previous Record and Minimum Sentence.* There is no obvious relation between previous record and minimum sentence. Seven out of nine prisoners who are serving minimum sentences longer than ten years are men with no known previous record. This fact is, however, an indirect result of the serious crimes, principally murder, committed by men who were first offenders. It is also, however, due to the fact that there are from two to three times as many men without previous record as with record.

(b) *Previous Record and Nationality.* In general the men without previous records are more frequent in the Italian and miscellaneous foreign groups. Those with a previous record of one term are relatively more frequent among native whites than among the other groups. In general, Italians and other foreign-born are principally first offenders, while native whites and colored are slightly more frequent among the repeating offenders. This is in part due to the relation previously established between type of crime, previous record and nationality. As has been shown, the offenses which are committed principally by first offenders are also committed principally by colored and foreign-born.

(c) *Previous Record and Years in U. S.* There is no obvious relation of previous record to years in U. S.

(d) *Previous Record and Age.* There is a slight tendency for those without previous record to be older than those with previous records.

(e) *Previous Record and Mental Age.* There is no obvious relation between previous record and mental age. The distribution of mental ages is approximately the same for all groups.

(f) *Previous Record and Schooling.* Similarly, there is no obvious relation between previous record and schooling. The relationship is very much the same as that with mental age, probably because of the close relationship between schooling and mental age.

(g) *Previous Record and Diagnosis.* Likewise, there is no striking relation between previous record and diagnosis except that in the psychotic group there are twice as many men with previous record of one term as there should be for the total percentage of men having served one previous term. The relation between crime and previous record previously discussed is not caused by a relation of record to diagnosis. Contrary to expectation the feeble-minded of this study are not recidivists, nor are the recidivists predominantly feeble-minded.

3. RELATION OF MINIMUM SENTENCE TO OTHER FACTORS.

There is no obvious relationship between minimum sentence and any of the other factors. Eighty-six per cent of all these prisoners have a minimum sentence of less than five years, regardless of previous record, nationality, age, mental age, schooling, and diagnosis. The distributions in each of these factors is very much the same whatever the minimum sentence. This lack of relation is particularly significant from the standpoint of criminology, disappointing as it does a reasonable expectation of the relation of crime and individual responsibility to the length of sentence. Since individual responsibility is a complex of the factors of nationality, age, mental age, schooling, and mental type, it is reasonable to expect that there should be some relation of length of sentence to these factors.

4. RELATION OF NATIONALITY TO OTHER FACTORS.

The relation of nationality to crime and previous record has already been discussed. The principal crimes of native whites are breaking, entering and larceny, and illegal conduct. The principal crimes of negroes are assault and breaking and entering. The principal crimes of Italians are murder, assault, and breaking and entering. The principal crimes of miscellaneous and foreign-born are assault and breaking and entering. It has also been shown that there are relatively more recidivists among the native whites and colored than among the Italians and miscellaneous foreign-born.

(a) *Nationality and Mental Age.* There is an obvious relation between mental age and nationality. The median mental age of these native whites is about 14 years; of these colored is about 11 years, and of these Italians is about 10.5 years, and of these miscellaneous foreign-born is about 12 years. This is almost the identical relationship that was found to exist among these several groups in the army.

(b) *Nationality and Schooling.* The relation of nationality to schooling is much the same as the relation of nationality to mental age. This is because success in schooling is in such a large measure dependent upon mental age. The median schooling of these native whites is about six to seven school grades; of these colored is about two to three grades; of these Italians is no grades, and of these miscellaneous foreign-born is about four grades. This again is much the same relation between nationality and schooling as was found to exist among army recruits.

(c) *Nationality and Diagnosis.* There is no obvious relation of nationality to diagnosis. This is because the diagnosis is based upon

the nationality standards; therefore the relation of nationality to mental age has been overcome in diagnosis by considering a man average according to the standard for his own nationality and color. The feeble-minded, however, are principally among the native whites, while the psychotic are principally among the colored, Italians, and miscellaneous foreign-born.

5. RELATION OF MENTAL AGE TO OTHER FACTORS.

(a) *Mental Age and Schooling.* The significant relationship between mental age and schooling which has been found in so many psychological and educational studies is also indicated by these results. The dependence of schooling upon mental age is very great. In general, those with mental ages below 10 are for the most part illiterate. The majority of those with mental ages of 10 to 12 have schooling below the fifth grade. The majority of those with mental ages of 12 to 16 have schooling between the fifth grade and high school. The majority of those with mental ages above 16 have high school or college education.

(b) *Mental Age and Diagnosis.* The relation of mental age to diagnosis is not obvious in the table. This is because the diagnoses are based upon different standards according to nationality and color. The inferior normals are principally among the lowest quarter of mental ages according to nationality and color; the average normals include the middlemost 50 per cent, and the superior normals include the upper 25 per cent of each nationality and color. The feeble-minded, of course, are all below a mental age of 12 years, but not all those with mental ages below 12 are considered feeble-minded. This is because most of these men of low mental ages have been maintaining themselves with ordinary prudence in society at large; their crimes are more or less circumstantial and not a direct consequence of low intelligence. The psychotics, on the other hand, are spread over the middle and upper range of mental ages.

6. RELATION OF SCHOOLING TO DIAGNOSIS.

The relation of schooling to diagnosis is much the same as the relation of mental age to diagnosis because of the dependence of schooling upon mental age. The inferior normals have little or no schooling, the average normals have grammar grade schooling, and the superior normals have upper grammar grade schooling or high school schooling. The feeble-minded, again, have little or no schooling, while the psychotic are distributed over all of the school grades except college.

7. RELATION OF DIAGNOSIS TO OTHER FACTORS.

The relation of diagnosis to other factors is very much the same as the relation of these factors to diagnosis. This relationship has already been discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

SUMMARY

The outstanding relationships which are evident from a study of Table 1 are that crime is definitely related to nationality, previous record, and diagnosis. The other relationships discussed as of comparatively little significance for criminology, at least as indicated by these results. Many traditionally accepted relationships are not found in these data. It is important to emphasize, however, that on the basis of the facts here presented we make no effort to contradict these previously established relationships. The discussion has been brought out in detail principally to illustrate a method of analyzing some of the many interrelated factors in criminology. It may also be emphasized that these are by no means all the factors or even the most significant ones; they are merely the ones which best lend themselves to statistical treatment. All previous studies of the multiple factors in crime have been confined to analyses of single influences independently of their relation to each other. Consequently the inter-relations cannot be analyzed from them and the selective influences and false effects of unequal weighting cannot be allowed for. The present study is therefore a contribution to analytical technic rather than a contribution of significant facts.